

I.—INTRODUCTION. BY THE EDITOR.

The appearance of yet another popular or scientific magazine on a veritable ocean of literature of this nature needs some apology; and I propose to set forth briefly the reason of inception of the Sarawak Museum Journal, and the lines of work it intends to pursue.

First, then, let us consider the object of our birth——“For the promotion of scientific knowledge and study of the Natives and Natural History of the Island of Borneo”——and make that our excuse.

Although many interesting and valuable books, many scientific memoirs and notes have appeared on the Natives and Natural History of Borneo, nevertheless we are driven to the usual tantalizing conclusion, namely, that the deeper we search into any branch of science, the more we realize the extent of our ignorance in that branch. And the cry of the specialist continues to rise all over the world from every kind of scientific institution, “Give us more material for study, more records of observations, more extensive data”. In response to this, as it were, Museums have sprung up in many a distant land, becoming valuable repositories for the ethnological, geological and faunistic products of their own particular districts; and to them first of all must the scientific student apply for first hand assistance in any line of work. Since the sole *raison d'être* of these institutions is to specialize in their own defined areas, so no longer is it necessary for the student of *Ceylon* insects, for instance, to search through *European* collections for his material and data; his first inquiry is now directed to the country itself and his first search is among the published records of the

scientific societies and institutions of that country. Thus throughout the East we find these scientific outposts,—in Japan, in the Philippines, the Malay Peninsula, Java, in India and Ceylon—, each carrying on the work of inquiry into the wonderful problems of Nature as presented by their own particular areas: and by reason of this work we find each institution, each society becoming more and more valuable for reference to the man of research and the seats of learning at home. Neither, of course, is the East alone in this class of work; for similar institutions are to be found in distant corners of America, Africa and Australia, many of whose names have long been famous in connection with scientific discoveries of the first magnitude.

Thus the object of the Sarawak Museum is to take up its station worthily with the select band of far distant Field-Museums, to add its humble quota of votive offerings on the altar of Science, and by means of the Sarawak Museum Journal to facilitate and encourage the study of the "Natives and Natural History of the Island of Borneo".

In many ways Borneo is singularly well provided with material and facilities for research of every kind. And, as is well-known the natural history riches of the Malayan region are practically unsurpassed, nor is Borneo in any way inferior to other islands of the Archipelago in this respect: nay rather, owing to the size of the country and its little-known interior, it possesses more attractions for the explorer and natural history collector than many of the other islands. Although probably but little remains to be discovered in the way of new species among the mammals, birds and reptiles, yet the life-histories, habits and accurate distribution of the majority are practically unknown. With the Flora of Borneo it is the same: for a glance at current scientific literature shows that new species, and new genera even, are discovered and described every year: thus still more perhaps are researches needed in the Botany of this country than among the higher Orders of the Animal Kingdom. We must remember too, that, as we descend the scale,—through the Arthropoda, Mollusca, Echinodermata, Coelenterata down to Protozoa—, our knowledge of these

lower organisms becomes less, and consequently, the more pressing becomes the need for observation, collection and research.

For the study of natives Sarawak is peculiarly fortunate in possessing a government—now of some seventy years' standing—whose sole object is the welfare of the natives of the country; thus there is no interference with the daily life, customs, beliefs, etc., of the people; their independent characteristics are allowed to develop undisturbed; and, at the same time, owing to the conditions of general peace and security, the European is free to pursue his research with advantage and safety. On the other hand, it is just this peaceful condition of life in Sarawak that calls for immediate attention and study in the ethnology of the country; for while tribes who are in close proximity to one another are continually at war with one another, they will preserve their separate characteristics of speech, weapons, ceremonies, etc., etc.; but once they are at peace they intermingle, smaller tribes become merged in more powerful tribes, so that the "specific purity" of the larger tribes becomes tainted through inter-marriage, and the task of the anthropologist becomes increased a hundred-fold.

Many writers in the past have emphasized the pressing need for immediate study of native races: thus some 30 years ago, Professor H. N. Moseley in "Notes by a Naturalist on H. M. S. *Challenger*," wrote "..... animals and plants and races of men are perishing rapidly day by day, and will soon be, like the Dodo, things of the past. The history of these things once gone can never be recovered but must remain forever a gap in the knowledge of mankind. The loss will be most deeply felt in the province of anthropology, a science which is of higher importance to us than any other, as treating of the developmental history of our own species". And we know that since Professor Moseley, many other naturalists from time to time have written to the same effect.

It remains then to consider who are the men most likely to meet this imperative call to action, and by what means they may be best encouraged and assisted. Unfortunately it is given to only a few

scientific naturalists to travel extensively or make a lengthy sojourn in any one country for the sole purposes of scientific research. And there is by no means a plethora of travellers trained to observe and record the valuable material which comes their way.

More often than not a hasty scamper through a little-known country provides the material for a "book of travel" which will contain one mass of inaccurate records, collected no doubt in all good faith, but absolutely valueless by reason of the author's ignorance of the country and the superficiality of his observations:—and this, perhaps, the only "work of reference" on one particular country or tribe! It is curious to reflect on the number of books of this type which make their appearance year by year, when such classic examples of simplicity of narrative and accuracy of detail have been provided for the last half-century by such works as Darwin's "Voyage of the Beagle", Wallace's "Malay Archipelago", Belt's "Nicaragua", or the "Naturalist on the Amazons" by H. W. Bates. And alas! how seldom do books of this latter type appear!

One turns then to those whose duties take them to far distant lands for some length of time, and especially to those whose life is spent in continual contact with the natives, such as District Officers or Missionaries. To them one must look for accurate information, not necessarily embodied in a learned treatise on the natives or on any particular subject, but rather in the form of a succession of simple observations, noted and verified day by day during their life among the natives of their own particular district. And it should be the privilege and duty of scientific Institutions and Societies in those lands to diligently collect and publish such notes, and so accumulate a mass of absolutely trustworthy records.

Thus, then, the object of the "Sarawak Museum Journal." *Floreat florebit.*